



Haverhill School Committee – Special Meeting of May 15, 2014

Mayor James Fiorentini, Chairperson called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Present were: Attorney Paul Magliocchetti; Mrs. Susan Danehy; Mr. Scott Wood, Vice President; Shaun Toohey, President; Mr. James F. Scully, Superintendent of Schools, and Dr. Mary Malone, Assistant Superintendent. Mrs. Maura Ryan-Ciardiello arrived at 9:05 a.m. Mr. Joseph Bevilacqua was recorded absent.

Mayor Fiorentini led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Scully indicated his appreciation to committee members for attending this special meeting in order to solidify staffing at the senior administrative level. He acknowledged that the district did not want to lose qualified candidates for positions.

Mr. Scully recommended Julie R. Kukenberger as the Assistant Superintendent of Schools. The Superintendent was bringing this candidate forward to the School Committee for interview.

Mayor Fiorentini and the other committee members welcomed Mrs. Kukenberger and asked her to provide details on her background.

Mrs. Kukenberger indicated that she was presently living in New Jersey and that her husband had recently accepted professor position at the University of New Hampshire. They were excited to be relocating to this area and making it their long-term family home.

Mrs. Kukenberger noted that she began her career as a classroom teacher, then as a vice principal, principal and ultimately as the Director of Curriculum and Instruction. She has spent her entire educational career in the North Hanover Township School District in Wrightstown, New Jersey.

Her opening remarks included the following:

- Worked closely with Superintendent on revamping entire curriculum to the Common Core;*
- Focused on professional learning communities;*
- Established fundamental shifts in curriculum;*
- Emphasized the Workshop Model and the Collaboration of staff;*
- Focusing on learning as opposed to teaching*

Committee Members Questions and Observations:

Attorney Magliocchetti noted that he was part of initial interview team and related that her dynamic personality and enthusiasm captivated interview board during her Skype interview.

Question: What types of programs you developed that could be brought to Haverhill?

Kukenberger Response: She must first analyze the district. Mrs. Kukenberger noted that the use of instructional coaches, along with professional development has been a powerful initiative. Additionally, TAC – Technology Across the Curriculum has helped her district prepare for the PARCC testing program that is coming in the near future.



Haverhill School Committee – Special Meeting of May 15, 2014

Attorney Magliocchetti: Thanked her for her response and looked forward to working with her.

Mr. Toohey commended the subcommittee composed of Attorney Magliocchetti and Vice President Wood for bringing forth such a qualified candidate. He noted his lack of conviction in the PARCC testing program.

Question: Any challenges with adjusting to the Massachusetts curriculum and leading the charge?

Kukenberger Response: There will be a learning curve adjusting to some of the Massachusetts specific standards, however, she had a superior handle on Common Core. Mrs. Kukenberger noted that this testing program had begun a lot of conversations that were not happening in the past. Furthermore, the rigor in PARCC was intensive and education was being viewed with fresh lens; PARCC will lead to good things in education. She stated that her work ethic and positive attitude would be beneficial to support these changes.

Question: How would you handle your adjustment and challenges (if any) to a larger school district?

Question: What is the make-up of North Hanover Township?

Question: How would you approve student achievement in sub-groups (any ideas you would bring to Haverhill)?

Kukenberger Response: North Hanover Township is a rural district with the population composed of 75% military dependents. She further elaborated that the district was diverse and also faced challenges with its sub-groups. Mrs. Kukenberger noted that the school system was heavily impacted with \$9-10 million provided by the federal government; which required yearly visits to Washington DC to secure funding. Additionally, she was excited about having a team to work with to close the achievement gaps.

Mr. Wood related that he was part of the interview team. He stated that she “won over the room” among individuals of many different backgrounds and perspectives; and he was impressed with her energy, eagerness and willingness to learn. Mr. Wood noted that the committee was unanimous in their endorsement of her candidacy.

Question: Please detail your experience in grant writing?

Kukenberger Response: She has experience in writing the Title I, Title II and Title III grants. Mrs. Kukenberger stated that this was a rebirth for her district utilizing those funds to supplement their education in a high quality way. Additionally, grow people internally so that if funding went away the work would be carried forward.

Question: Your current district – what is the grade configuration and how would you adjust to an urban district with a high school? How will you get acclimated to these new grades?



Kukenberger Response: The grade configuration is K-6. She stated her philosophy is preparing students for the future after they leave the public schools – getting to graduation and post-graduation. Mrs. Kukenberger stated 21st century learners needed to be: flexible; agile; have effective oral and written communication skills; innovative; optimistic; hopeful and self-regulated. She stated that these were life skills that needed to be in the forefront of all learning. Mrs. Kukenberger commented that she does a lot of reading outside of the educational field; and that learning has to be relevant and exciting so that students will want to come to school and make it valuable to them. Additionally, she stated that gaining knowledge about the high school; meeting the high school principal and staff. She related that it would be a major focus as she grows in her profession.

Question: Please tell us about your experience with STEM?

Kukenberger Response: Currently, she is looking at the next generation of science standards that is linked to resources timely and current; making sure teachers have the prerequisite knowledge. She noted that in North Hanover they were partnering with Rider University to have them evaluate science and technology curriculum. Mrs. Kukenberger could not emphasize enough the interaction and intersection of all curricula.

Mr. Wood stated that he and Attorney Magliocchetti both agreed that she was their number one choice and that they don't often agree on most matters. He further related that it was very important that the person in this position who has the potential to be superintendent; someone that is a lifelong learner; driven and someone people will follow. Mr. Wood stated that she had many of these qualities and that she will do the needed research to learn about Haverhill. He noted that rarely did a candidate have this type of potential and he hoped that she would remain in Haverhill for a very long time.

Mrs. Ryan-Ciardiello thanked the superintendent, Mr. Wood and Attorney Magliocchetti for the selection of an excellent candidate. She acknowledged Mrs. Kukenberger's love of children and teaching.

Question: What are some of the things you would do to enhance programs at high school level?

Kukenberger Response: She stated before a transition plan is formed; an assessment needs to be completed first; she does not want to come into the district with pre-packaged plans.

Mrs. Ryan-Ciardiello thanked Mrs. Kukenberger.

Mrs. Danehy thanked Mrs. Kukenberger for making trip to Massachusetts.

Question: How did you engender organic growth in teachers – and buy-in to the program?

Kukenberger Response: She commented that it takes time and patience and that she needed to recognize where people were in the process and how much information they would be willing to



receive. Mrs. Kukenberger acknowledged her excitement about the changes was not enough to achieve growth; professional learning communities were extremely important. She also had to recognize the skills and talents of teachers to groom them to be leaders.

Question: Your most challenging experience (most resistant)?

Kukenberger Response: She commented that change is hard even when we invite it; if she forgot about relationships it became difficult and the reset button needed to be pressed. Mrs. Kukenberger found the best practice was giving teachers enough information in digestible portions.

Question: There are many challenges and sometimes reset is not possible?

Kukenberger Response: She stated her philosophy was “it has to be better today than yesterday” and this was how you accomplish goals; the work will be messy but it will be worth it.

Question: Could you give a specific example?

Kukenberger Response: Mrs. Kukenberger responded the curriculum in general since it had been textbook driven district. She noted the shift to a self-created, very tightly aligned curriculum and the autonomy to continually adjust this living-breathing, thinking curriculum.

Mrs. Danehy was most pleased with Mrs. Kukenberger’s experience in a small community and a K-6 district; and she was hyper-focused on lower grades and their success in future grades.

Question: One of the things key to students?

Kukenberger Response: She noted that reading is the key to success – the “quickest way out of poverty is through books”; creating a reading life. Mrs. Kukenberger related good readers are good writers; she gave an example of her encouragement of a little boy and his choosing to read during a break in instructional time.

Question: How did you evaluate program’s success?

Kukenberger Response: She commented that when she first became the Director of Curriculum that half of the fifth and sixth graders were not minimal reading proficiency and that was a crisis. She had an opportunity to go to Columbia University for a Coaching Institute on Writing with Lucy Calkins, which was extremely powerful. Mrs. Kukenberger stated that they piloted this workshop model. She noted that children were independently reading and had begun to enjoy writing; this indicated that the program was successful.

The Mayor acknowledged Mrs. Ryan-Ciardiello for additional questions.

Question: How long have you been using the Common Core?



Haverhill School Committee – Special Meeting of May 15, 2014

Kukenberger Response: She stated that the Common Core was drastically different; and her work over the past few years was to make sure they are understood.

Mrs. Ryan-Ciardello noted that an important area was parent involvement and Haverhill being a large district it was a challenge to get parents involved in education; she asked for some initiatives Mrs. Kukenberger would bring to Haverhill.

Kukenberger Response: The school was a center of activity for the Township along with a very active PTO and active parent involvement. She noted that the military families were more challenging and you had to look at service delivery i.e., work schedules and deployment. Mrs. Kukenberger would assess community (surveys and noon-time luncheon meetings) and develop a program that is not for the school system's convenience.

Mayor Fiorentini commented on Mrs. Kukenberger's energy and enthusiasm in addition to the focus on raising MCAS scores. He asked about standardized testing in New Jersey.

Kukenberger Response: New Jersey ASK in grades 3-6 and 8 & 11; next year gearing up for PARCC.

Mayor Fiorentini asked how she improved test scores in her district.

Kukenberger Response: She responded that it was important that the teachers were implementing a curriculum aligned to the standards and that there was consistency in teaching. Mrs. Kukenberger commented that the shift from AYP (Annual Yearly Progress) to the (SGP) Student Growth Percentile is long overdue and would yield some good evidence of student learning. Mrs. Kukenberger stated that PARCC would result in new baselines. Additionally, she spent time looking at local assessments (common benchmark assessments) and intervention tools. Mrs. Kukenberger related that evidence based and grounded in research to make educational decisions.

Mayor Fiorentini asked about extended learning time such as longer school year/day.

Kukenberger Response: She was not totally in support of more school days but she definitely supported changes in this out of date model. Mrs. Kukenberger supported embedded instructional time; including adjusting the school year to allow for embedded learning time (professional development which is essential) for teachers. She referenced the New York City's teachers' contract changes with an additional hour per week for parent communication and professional time plus four professional days an increase of two days.

Mayor Fiorentini commented that Mrs. Kukenberger was a scholar. He stated his conviction about the necessity for expanded time and learning/longer school years referencing the Bennett Study on Elementary Education and an article by Senator Mike Barrett in Atlantic Monthly.

Kukenberger Response: She stated that there was much educational research but we tend to do the same thing; change is long overdue – there should be a look at public education through new lens.



Haverhill School Committee – Special Meeting of May 15, 2014

Mayor Fiorentini asked about MCAS Improvement – raising scores and focusing on underperforming schools.

Kukenberger Response: She responded that an in-depth data review would be conducted and then recommendations would be forthcoming after analysis of trends.

Mayor Fiorentini stated his support for her appointment and asked how after one year Mrs. Kukenberger should be evaluated.

Kukenberger Response: She related her goals would be focused on students and also goals tied to leadership and how it impacts students; Mrs. Kukenberger asked the committee for authentic feedback and areas of growth.

Mr. Scully informed the public that there were forty (40) applicants for the position; this applicant pool was reduced to twenty (20) candidates and finally ten (10) applicants were selected for interviews over a two-day period. The superintendent related that there were both external and four internal candidates. He further noted that the last two SKYPE interviews were outstanding and the school committee members were so impressed with these candidates that they thought both should be hired for positions. Mr. Scully continued that further debate by the interview board brought forth the recommendation to hire Julie Kukenberger as the Assistant Superintendent of Schools. The Superintendent indicated that he was pleased to make this recommendation.

Moved by Mr. Wood and seconded by Mrs. Danehy to appoint Julie Kukenberger as Assistant Superintendent of Haverhill Public Schools, subject to contract negotiations.

The Superintendent indicated that he had a draft contract available for review in executive session.

A roll call vote was held and the results were the following:

<i>Mrs. Ryan-Ciardello</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Attorney Magliocchetti</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Mrs. Danehy</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Mr. Wood</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Mr. Toohey</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Mayor Fiorentini</i>	<i>Yes</i>

A 6-0 vote; Julie Kukenberger is appointed Assistant Superintendent of Schools.

Mayor Fiorentini asked the location of the township; he noted that his wife was from New Jersey.

Mrs. Kukenberger answered Burlington County - South Central New Jersey outside Trenton and that she was originally from upstate New York.

The committee applauded and welcomed Mrs. Kukenberger.



Mr. Scully related that during the interview process, many issues were reassessed. The superintendent indicated that two candidates were being considered for assistant superintendent; both Mr. Wood and Attorney Magliocchetti had stated that they wished both individuals could be hired.

He noted that significant changes in leadership positions were being undertaken and that he was taking a fresh look at the delivery of services in the school system. The superintendent commented that areas that were being assessed were strategic planning and failures/successes.

Superintendent Scully recalled that when he accepted the superintendency in 2010, the state made it clear that Haverhill has to improve its delivery of services to English Language Learners; he related that a fresh set of eyes on this portion of our student population. In addition, the superintendent noted that another important area that requires additional attention is STEM; the areas of Science, Technology Engineering and Math are increasingly important to colleges when selecting students. He had delineated the many areas that needed to be addressed.

He concluded that in his opinion that in revamping some administrative roles he could save, at a minimum, \$20,000 in next year's budget; this would result in more direct service delivery for our teachers and staff with the end result being overall academic improvement.

The superintendent recommended the elimination of two positions and the establishment of the position of Director of School Improvement and Accountability.

Mr. Wood referenced the candidate had worked in the Washington DC public schools and then worked as a principal in Washington state. Vice President Wood noted the individual had unique ideas in underperforming school systems; had been successful in finding a way to turnaround the school system. He noted that the person was highly qualified and bright and would be third in command in the school system; a new leadership team comprised of Mr. Scully, Mrs. Kukenberger and this individual.

Attorney Magliocchetti stated the individual was very dynamic, bright and had innovative ideas. He was very knowledgeable about education and had received his Master's Degree from John Hopkins. Attorney Magliocchetti stated the candidate added diversity and would achieve a very dynamic leadership team; he supported the recommendation.

Mrs. Danehy supported the motion and the delineation of job responsibilities between the assistant superintendent and director.

Mr. Scully is confident that the talent of these two individuals may bring in additional grant funds. He also mentioned the candidate tenure in Montgomery County. The superintendent stated that his goal has been to assemble a leadership team.



Haverhill School Committee – Special Meeting of May 15, 2014

Moved by Mrs. Danehy to accept the superintendent's recommendation to eliminate two positions from the budget and approve the creation of the position of Director of School Improvement and Accountability.

Mr. Wood had the exact motion: to eliminate the ELA and Science Curriculum Supervisor positions and create a new position of Director of School Improvement and Accountability.

Moved by Mrs. Danehy and seconded by Attorney Magliocchetti to eliminate the ELA and Science Curriculum Supervisor positions and create a new position of Director of School Improvement and Accountability.

Mr. Toohey stated he would not support the measure and needed more time to analyze the proposal.

Mayor Fiorentini asked if the individuals would be laid off.

The superintendent indicated that the layoffs had already occurred; one staff member will return to a teaching position.

Mayor Fiorentini asked if there were real savings in the budget.

The superintendent stated he would still eliminate the positions even if he did not get the new position in order to meet the goal and expectations. He detailed that you have to trust the coach (superintendent) but the committee empowers the superintendent to make decisions to improve the district. He related that there would be a savings of \$20,000 and could recover possibly 100% of the salary.

A roll call vote was held and the results were the following:

<i>Mrs. Ryan-Ciardiello</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Attorney Magliocchetti</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Mrs. Danehy</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Mr. Wood</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Mr. Toohey</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Mayor Fiorentini</i>	<i>Yes</i>

Motion is approved by a 5-1 vote; the elimination of the ELA and Science Curriculum Supervisor positions and create a new position of Director of School Improvement and Accountability.

Moved by Mr. Wood and seconded by Mrs. Danehy to go into executive session (10:26 a.m.) for the purpose of contract negotiations and return to open session only for the purposes of adjournment.

A roll call vote was held and the results were the following:

<i>Mrs. Ryan-Ciardiello</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Attorney Magliocchetti</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Mrs. Danehy</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Mr. Wood</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Mr. Toohey</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Mayor Fiorentini</i>	<i>Yes</i>

